



The Urban Environmental Program (UEP), launched in 1995 as the Urban Environmental Initiative, addresses environmental and public health problems in urban areas. The UEP facilitates community based environmental protection in targeted cities by taking an active roll in listening to community needs and concerns, identifying projects, and providing resources to implement projects that make measurable improvements in public health and the quality of the urban environment.

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Fact Sheet/June 2002

Providence, RI



Photo: K. Kiley

What Makes Providence Special?

- Over the past ten years Providence has experienced an increase in total population, making it the second fastest growing city in the northeast.
- The city has long been home to a diverse community. The 2000 Census data shows the population is more than one third Hispanic and that more than 75% of Providence residents under 18 are considered minority.

Why Does it Need Special Attention?

- One in every five children in the City of Providence has elevated blood lead levels. Lead poisoning is the most common childhood disease for children in the city.
- The Woonasquatucket River is the only RI river with a fish advisory due to unsafe levels of mercury, dioxin, PCBs and high bacteria levels after heavy rains due to combined sewer overflows.
- Providence has over 4,000 residential vacant lots with significant environmental and public health risks due to illegal dumping and urban rats.

What are the Long Term Goals?

- To reduce childhood lead poisoning rates in the City of Providence and throughout RI, restore the Woonasquatucket River for swimming and fishing, and improve indoor air quality to reduce asthma triggers.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress has Been Made?

- Providence lead poisoning rates are down from 1 in every 3 children with elevated blood lead levels to 1 in every 5.
- Childhood Lead Action Project created the first of its kind state-wide RI Lead Collaborative for community stakeholders involved in lead poisoning education and outreach.
- 70 school nurses across RI were trained in *Tools for Schools*.
- The multi-lingual "Do's and Don'ts for the Woonasquatucket River" education and outreach campaign reached over 500 children and over 11,000 local residents.
- The City's Department of Planning and Development remediated heavily lead-contaminated vacant lots, continued the Special Vacant Lot for \$1 Program, and runs the Alice Hicks Mini-Grants Program for qualified residents to compete for up to \$5,000 to rehabilitate a vacant lot.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2002?

- Maintain and expand work of the RI Lead Collaborative to increase partnership participation and track lead poisoning rates in Providence and RI.
- Implement *Tools for Schools* program in 25 RI schools.

(continued)

City of Providence



Who Are The Partners?

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management • City of Providence, Department of Planning • Childhood Lead Action Project • Smart Growth Rhode Island • Groundwork Providence • Save The Bay • Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy • Olneyville Housing Corporation • Southside Community Land Trust • Providence Environmental Strike Team and Environmental Court • Environmental Diversity Education Forum • The Providence Plan • Roger Williams Park Zoo • City Year • AmeriCorps • Brown University, Center for Environmental Studies • Direct Action for Rights and Equality • Youth in Action • South East Asian Economic Development Center • Rhode Island Department of Health • Audubon Society of Rhode Island • Northern Rhode Island Conservation District • A.M.E.N., Inc. • Providence Community Health Center • South Providence Development Corporation • Friends of the Moshasuck • HELP Lead Safe Center • V.N.A. of CARE New England • Hasbro Children's Hospital • Providence Housing Authority • Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services • Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation • Progreso Latino • Urban League of Rhode Island • Providence Neighborhood Housing Corporation • Providence Pediatric Asthma Coalition • Rhode Island Lead Collaborative



What Major Actions are Planned for 2002? (continued)

- ▶ Revise and update the "Do's and Don'ts for the Woonasquatucket" multi-lingual education campaign and reach over 1,000 people through interactive classroom presentations, take-home materials, and watershed information.
- ▶ Continue tracking work on the Special Vacant Lot for \$1Program and the Alice Hicks Mini-Grants Program to document number of vacant lots returned to safe re-use.
- ▶ Host community listening sessions in cities across RI to identify cross-cutting environmental and public health problems impacting urban residents and active environmental and public health groups working outside Providence.
- ▶ Continue implementation of the Lead-Safe Yard Project for owner-occupied daycare units in four urban areas, including Providence.
- ▶ Complete a draft of the Mashapaug Pond Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan for dissolved oxygen and nutrient enrichment in 2002.

Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.

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